



**Northeast and Caribbean Region**

# **Small Business News**

**Winter 2005/06, Issue VI**

brought to you by

**The U.S. General Services Administration  
Northeast and Caribbean Region  
Small Business Utilization Center (SBUC)**



## **GSA Federal Supply Schedules Program**

The Schedules Program Objective for GSA is to provide Federal agencies and customers a simplified process of obtaining commonly used services and products at prices associated with volume buying. The GSA Schedules Program has roots that go back over 90 years, but today the Program is a new force in Government acquisition. It is a force because it works within the current laws and regulations to provide ordering activities with a simplified and streamlined method for acquiring commercial services and products. The Schedules contract is the key element in forging a link between sellers in the commercial marketplace and ordering activities. It defines the relationship between the Government and a commercial business to meet future ordering activity requirements for a particular type of service or product. That relationship provides the flexibility to meet the ordering activity's evolving requirements with commercial services and products that offer best value solutions.



## **GSA's Mission**

GSA's mission is to help Federal agencies better serve the public by offering, at best value, superior workplaces, expert solutions, acquisition services and management policies. This is accomplished through our three services - PBS, FSS and FTS.

### **Public Buildings Service:**

The GSA Public Buildings Service (PBS) is the Federal Government's property developer, lesser and manager of federally-owned and leased properties. PBS is responsible for planning, designing, building, restoring, renovating, decorating and landscaping Government-owned office buildings and other facilities and for maintenance and security. PBS also leases property for Federal agencies. PBS has a nationwide network of centers and field offices that manage, operate, maintain, alter, preserve and repair all facilities under its custody and control. These centers purchase building materials and services needed to operate and maintain the more than 8,000 Federal buildings managed by GSA

### **Federal Supply Service:**

The Federal Supply Service (FSS) offers more products/services than any commercial enterprise in the world. With a business volume of over \$25 billion, the FSS is the manager of the Federal Supply Schedules Program and the provider of over one million commercial off-the-shelf products. The FSS offers a wide variety of services, products, and supplies, such as management and financial services, telecommunications, information technology, furniture, hand held tools, and motor vehicles, including cars, boats, trucks, etc.

### **Federal Technology Service:**

The Federal Technology Service (FTS) provides value-added information technology solutions and network services through FTS associates and contracted vendors through in-place contracts.



## ***“How to Obtain a GSA Federal Supply Schedule Contract”***

**Wednesday, January 11, 2006**

**9am- 1pm (Please arrive at 8:30am to sign in)  
26 Federal Plaza (Duane Street Entrance), New York City  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Center Room A  
(Photo ID Required)**

**This in-depth workshop will cover the process of getting on the GSA Federal Supply Schedule. It will explain how to access government solicitations, the most significant sections of an offer, how to submit an offer, and the evaluation and award process.**

***Free admission! Seating is limited, so register soon!  
Please be sure to review the “Frequently Asked Questions”  
document on the website below to ensure that this workshop is  
appropriate for your company!***



**Please register at: [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)**



**If you have any questions about the workshop,  
please email [R2.SBUC@gsa.gov](mailto:R2.SBUC@gsa.gov) or call 212-264-8265.**

**This program is extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.  
All small businesses in any type of industry are invited to attend.**



# Doing Business with GSA

Learn how to sell your products/services to GSA and the federal government!

Small businesses that are looking to enter into the federal market are invited to attend a beginner's workshop on how to do business with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the federal government.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2006**

9am-1pm (Please arrive at 8:30am to sign in)

26 Federal Plaza, New York City

(Duane Street Entrance. Photo ID Required.)

6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Center, Room A

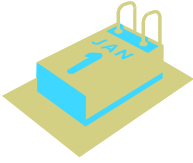
Free admission! Seating is limited, so register soon!

*With an awarded government contract, you could be on your way to achieving business growth!*

**Please register at: [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)**

If you have any questions about the workshop,  
please email [R2.SBUC@gsa.gov](mailto:R2.SBUC@gsa.gov) or call 212-264-8265.

This program is extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.  
All small businesses in any type of industry are invited to attend.



## **And Coming Soon in 2006...\***

New York City, February 8, 2006: "How to Obtain a GSA Federal Supply Contract" workshop

New York City, March 8, 2006: "How to Obtain a GSA Federal Supply Contract" workshop

Albany N.Y., March, 2006: "How to Obtain a GSA Federal Supply Contract" workshop

*Please email [R2.SBUC@gsa.gov](mailto:R2.SBUC@gsa.gov) to obtain additional information.*

**\*Dates subject to change**



## **Marketing Assistance from GSA**

**In this issue, the SBUC explains how small businesses can grow their business by obtaining marketing assistance from GSA after they receive a contract award under GSA's Multiple Award Schedule program.**

Once a vendor receives a Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract from the Office Supplies and Administrative Services Center (located in New York City), the Acquisition Marketing & Business Development Branch makes itself available to provide marketing assistance to new GSA Schedule holders.

The Branch assists new Schedule holders in promoting their product and service offerings to federal civilian agencies and the US military. The Branch provides marketing support by promoting all seven GSA Schedules managed by the Center, by attending numerous industry outreach events, and by educating vendors and federal buyers about the benefits of attending both regional and national events

and customer training sessions. Outreach events provide an opportunity for the small business community to meet potential prime contractors and discuss teaming arrangements and subcontracting opportunities. Contractor Teaming Arrangements are an excellent source of quality service. Teaming Arrangements are created when two or more GSA Schedule contractors join together to provide a total solution to meet agency needs.

Schedule holders learn about various small business opportunity programs available from GSA, the Small Business Administration, and other federal civilian agencies. The Acquisition Marketing & Business Development Branch also creates and distributes marketing brochures and educates federal buyers about the availability of the products and services offered under the Center's Schedule listings. Schedule Holders are also informed about the Customer Service Directors (CSD) which staff GSAs regional offices.

Vendors learn about the wealth of marketing information and procurement forecasts available at various websites and online at [www.GSAAdvantage.gov](http://www.GSAAdvantage.gov) and at [www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov](http://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov). Information is also provided about assistance available at GSAs Vendor Support Center ([www.vsc.gsa.gov](http://www.vsc.gsa.gov)) and at the section created exclusively for the business community entitled "For Contractors and Vendors", located on the [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) home page.

Another way the Branch provides marketing assistance is to encourage vendors to place free ads in Market Tips, GSAs bimonthly advertising publication. The magazine is a widely read marketing tool, and features articles of interest to the government buying community.

For further assistance, contact the Acquisition Marketing & Business Development Branch at 212/264-0868, or send an e-mail to [smartshop@gsa.gov](mailto:smartshop@gsa.gov).



## Additional Tips for Marketing Your New GSA Contract

1. Marketing and personal representation are the keys to your success as a supplier on a GSA Federal Supply Schedule. A basic understanding of what GSA does, its organization and how to market to Government agencies will make it easier to identify and pursue contracting opportunities. Please visit [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) to learn more about GSA. Also visit the websites of some of the major federal buying agencies that use our schedules to purchase, such as the Department of Defense, Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Energy, etc. to learn more about their operations.
2. Small businesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are striving more than ever to change the standards of expectation in the Federal market. These businesses are keenly aware that the key to satisfying customers is exceeding the customer's expectation. The following tips will give you a good start in doing just that:
  - a. Provide quality products and services
  - b. Obtain SBA Certification from SBA eligible programs, such as:
    - i. 8(a)
    - ii. HUB Zone
    - iii. Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)
  - c. Internet Access is MANDATORY!
  - d. Develop an effective marketing plan
  - e. Identify business type on brochures and business cards
  - f. Have multiple contracting vehicles in place, such as:
    - i. Government Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs)
    - ii. GSA Federal Supply Schedules
    - iii. Micro-purchase/simplified acquisitions

- g. Accept the Government's purchase card for orders under and over the micro-purchase threshold (\$2,500)
- h. Accept electronic funds transfer (EFT)
- i. Monitor agency websites for useful contracting information, events opportunities
- j. Network! Network! Network!



## Top Ten Federal Spenders

The Federal Government spends in excess of \$200 billion annually in the acquisition of goods and services. Use the websites to find out more about these agencies.

### Average Annual Expenditures in Billions:

1. Department of Defense - [www.dod.gov](http://www.dod.gov) \$161
2. Department of Energy - [www.doe.gov](http://www.doe.gov) \$21
3. National Aeronautics and Space Administration - [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov) \$11
4. Department of Veterans Affairs - [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) \$8
5. General Services Administration - [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) \$8
6. Department of Health And Human Services - [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) \$6
7. Department of Agriculture - [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) \$4
8. Department of Justice - [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov) \$3
9. Department of the Interior - [www.interior.gov](http://www.interior.gov) \$3
10. Department of Education - [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) \$3





## **General Tips to Optimize Opportunities with the Government**

1. Attend training sessions on obtaining contracts with the Federal Government
2. Conduct market research to identify potential customers, end-users and competitors
3. Assess your ability to compete in the Federal marketplace
4. Identify current contract holders in your industry for partnering and teaming opportunities
5. Obtain solicitations from [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov)
6. Look at historical data and ask questions
7. Submit your proposal and other required information before the due date
8. Attend agency conferences, workshops and seminars
9. Use Federal information resources to identify events and opportunities
10. Gain an understanding of Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) by visiting [www.arnet.gov/far](http://www.arnet.gov/far)
11. Monitor the award process by checking status regularly
12. Be sure you are able to accept the Government Purchasing Card.



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q.** *What is the difference between Federal Supply Schedules, Solicitations, GSA Contracts, GSA Schedules, etc?*

**A.** The **GSA Schedules Program** or **Federal Supply Schedules Program** is the name of the procurement discount program under the Federal Supply Service division of the General Services Administration. It was designed to provide all Federal agencies with access to products and/or services at a price considerably lower than what it would cost to buy the same products and/or services in the open market.

**GSA Schedules** or **Schedules** are the categories of commodities or services identified under the program. There are currently about 60 such general schedules or categories that represent more than four million products and services. The number of schedules may increase or decrease as we combine schedules for similar products and services or break them apart for better identification when needed. Both a number and a title identify each category. There are also Special Item Numbers (SINs) under each schedule number and title that represent the different products or services a company may submit for its offer. A company may submit an offer for all the SIN's available or just one.

**Solicitations** are the documents issued to request that vendors submit proposals to sell their products and/or services through an application process. Solicitations are used by most Government agencies to procure products and/or services.

**GSA Contracts** are the end result of the contract award process. You receive a contract once you fill out and complete the solicitation document and submit that document as your offer to GSA. GSA will review, hold discussions for corrections or negotiations, and either award or reject your offer. If the offer is awarded, you will receive a contract number and a copy of your new GSA contract. The solicitation becomes the contract document.

**Q.** *When do you need a GSA Schedule Contract?*

**A.** You need a contract with GSA when you are trying to sell your products or services to Federal agencies who only want to buy products and/or services from GSA contract holders. GSA Schedules are not mandatory but they are a preferred source of procurement for most Federal agencies.

**Q.** *What is GSA Advantage! and are all GSA Schedule contractors required to register with it?*

**A.** **GSA Advantage!** is an online shopping and ordering system that includes services and products under all of the GSA Multiple Award Schedules. With over 3.2 million services and products currently available, electronic ordering through GSA Advantage! allows a customer to send an order directly to the Schedule contractor, creating a direct customer-contractor relationship. For services that require a statement of work, a customer cannot order such services directly through GSA Advantage! The customer must create the order through the ordering agency's internal system.

**ALL** GSA Schedule contractors must be registered with GSA Advantage! at [gsaadvantage.gov](http://gsaadvantage.gov)

The screenshot shows the GSA Advantage! website. At the top is a navigation bar with links: Home, What's New, e-Buy, e-Library, Customer Assistance, Profile, Shopping cart (contains 0 item(s) \$0.00), and Login/Register. Below the navigation bar is a search section titled "What are you looking for?" with a text input field for keywords, a "Look in..." dropdown menu set to "All Categories", and a "Find it!" button. To the right of the search section is a "Welcome" message and a list of bullet points: "the most reliable resource for Federal purchasers", "the most comprehensive selection of approved products & services", and "the ability to complete purchases quickly, with confidence, and at best value". Below the welcome message is a "HURRICANE KATRINA" banner with the text "Attention Customers! Some orders to vendors located in areas affected by Katrina may be delayed. GSA has established hotlines to serve customers located in hard hit regions." and a "Click Here" button. On the right side of the page, there are several links: "Requisition Status", "NSN Quick Order", "FEDSTRIP", "Password assistance", "How do I get order status?", "About overseas ordering", "How do I obtain a GSA Supply Catalog?", "View our Tutorial...", "GSA e-Buy" (Need a quote? Let e-Buy help you prepare and process all your Requests for Quotes (RFQs). Learn more), "Vendor Help" (How do I get a GSA contract? How do I get on GSA Advantage? How do I receive orders? click here).

**Q.** *What is e-Buy?*

**A.** E-Buy is an online Request for Quote (RFQ) tool designed to facilitate the request for submission of quotes for a wide range of commercial services and products offered by Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contractors who are on GSA Advantage!

E-Buy, a component of GSA Advantage!, allows federal agencies (buyers) to maximize their buying power by leveraging the power of the Internet to increase Schedule contractor participation in order to obtain quotes which will result in a best value purchase decision. E-Buy provides Schedule contractors (sellers) with greater opportunities to offer quotes and increase business volume for services and products provided under their Schedule contracts. E-Buy streamlines the buying process with point-and-click functionality by allowing RFQs and responses to be exchanged electronically between federal agencies and Schedule contractors. In short, e-Buy provides both agencies and contractors with a tool that will result in savings of both time and money.

**Q.** *How does GSA determine if vendors are offering prices that are fair and reasonable to Federal Customers?*

**A.** The decision will take into consideration a wide variety of factors other than price that affect best value for a particular acquisition. They include warranty, environmental/energy efficient products, technical qualifications, customer support, trade-in value, and delivery terms.

**Q.** *Are GSA contractors required to accept the government-wide commercial purchase card for payment?*

**A.** Yes, GSA Schedule contractors are required to accept the purchase card for payments equal to or less than the micro-purchase threshold (\$2500). However, acceptance of the government-wide commercial purchase card for all amounts that exceed this threshold is strongly encouraged. The use of the government credit card is preferred among most agencies due to its convenient payment method.



## Websites for Small Businesses

- GSA's Homepage: <http://www.gsa.gov>
- GSA Office of Small Business Utilization: [www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness](http://www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness)
- GSA Schedules: [www.fss.gsa.gov/schedules](http://www.fss.gsa.gov/schedules)
- Schedules e-Library: [www.gsa.gov/elibrary](http://www.gsa.gov/elibrary)
- Central Contractor Registration (CCR): <http://www.ccr.gov>
- Federal Business Opportunities: <http://www.fbo.gov>
- SBA Program Certifications: [www.sba.gov/certifications](http://www.sba.gov/certifications)
- Loans: [http://www.sba.gov/starting\\_business/](http://www.sba.gov/starting_business/)
- Grants: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)
- Federal Acquisition Regulations: [www.arnet.gov/far](http://www.arnet.gov/far)



## Any questions?

Please contact the GSA SBUC by email at [R2.SBUC@gsa.gov](mailto:R2.SBUC@gsa.gov) or by phone at 212-264-1234. We may include your question in one of our future newsletters.

**We are very interested** in hearing about your experiences with GSA and the extent to which you are satisfied with the services we provide. Please be sure to let us know if you are awarded a contract.



lease send comments and suggestions about our newsletter by email, fax or mail.

Is there something you would like to see in future issues?  
We look forward to hearing from you!

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